

## Books of The Times

By TOM WICKER

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If there is one of its public figures that the knowing town of Washington never has quite understood, pigeonholed or put its finger on, that man is the languid and eloquent junior Senator from Arkansas, James William Fulbright. He is the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, a ranking figure in the limited intellectual hierarchy of Capitol Hill, and the subject of his rather unusual new book—a collection of his papers and speeches during twenty years in Congress under the file "Fulbright of Arkansas."

Harry Truman once called him "that over-educated Oxford S.O.B." (Influenced, no doubt, by Fulbright's having naively suggested that he resign as President when the Republicans won control of the Congress in 1946). Joe McCarthy liked to call him "Half-bright." He has been condemned as one who supports Arabs instead of Israelis, slugged by the right for criticizing the intrusion of the military into politics, slighted by the left for equivocating on the Southern racial question, and he was the only leading personage in Washington to enter a really forceful dissent before President Kennedy embarked on the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

That makes Fulbright sound like a fearlessly embattled rebel, a sort of constitutional gadfly. In fact he is a mild-mannered fellow, not at all given to controversy for controversy's sake, usually standing somewhat aloof from the current scene, and with little of the reformer's zeal in his makeup.

### 'A Genuine Conservative'

In a foreword to this new book of Senator Fulbright's papers, Walter Lippmann calls him "as genuine a conservative in the great tradition of conservatism as exists in our public life today." And Lippmann defines that "great tradition" in this way:

"The true conservatives, of whom the contracting ~~shipments of Senator Fulbright~~ are ably if admirably edited by Karl E. Meyer, an editorial writer on The Washington Post, it presents the most notable Fulbright documents from his two decades in Congress — his reply to the acid Clare Boothe Luce in his maiden speech in the House, his call for Mr. Truman's resignation (he suggested Mr. Eisenhower resign, too, when the latter lost control of Congress in 1954), some of his assaults on McCarthy, his prescient calls for



Senator J. W. Fulbright

European unity, the famous memorandum to President Kennedy warning against the Cuban invasion, the equally famous memo that set off the 1962 furor about military figures in politics, even his humorous lament for the passing of the old Senate subway cars.

What do these documents disclose, as one studies them in leisure? Eloquence, surely, and a literary style that marks their author in a Senate that long ago lost most of its claim to distinguished debate or even oratory. Courage, certainly — as exemplified by the Senator's remarks in the dangerous McCarthy era; although Meyer passes rather lightly over Fulbright's reluctance to speak out on racial affairs in the South.

Wisdom, wit, foresight, understanding — all the analysis is sound when applied to the entire relationship of President and Congress. Unfortunately, it is a minority view in a Congress that still seeks at every chance to impose its primacy on the President, rather than to do its fair and responsible share to help him govern.

The result is that Congress is fast failing to perform any constructive part in 20th century government.

Senator Fulbright's views on foreign policy and other affairs, as presented in this uncritical book, are admirable. One wonders, however, if it is not rather his thoughtful conception of the legislator's role and his performance in it that will be counted his

*FULBRIGHT OF ARKANSAS. The Public Positions of a Private Thinker. Edited by Karl E. Meyer, with a foreword of Walter Lippmann. 276 pp. Washington: Robert B. Luce, Inc. \$5.50.*

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